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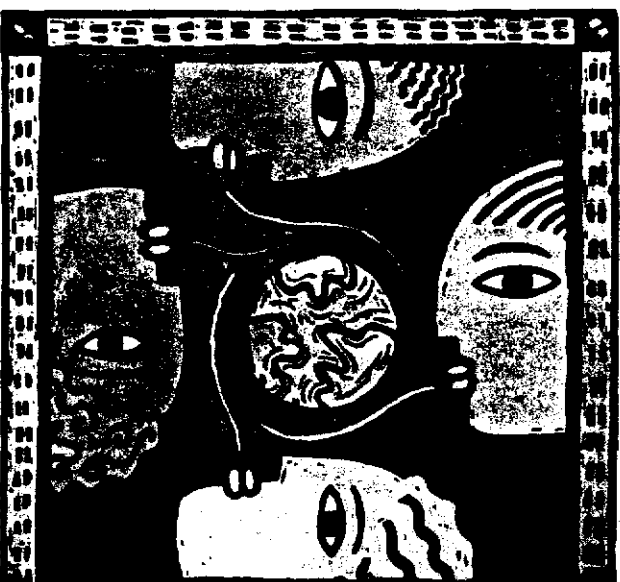
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# Language Learners of



# TOMORROW

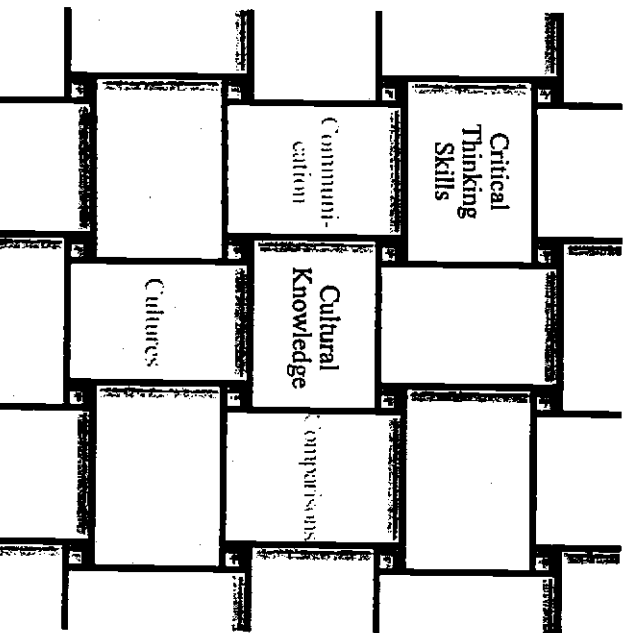
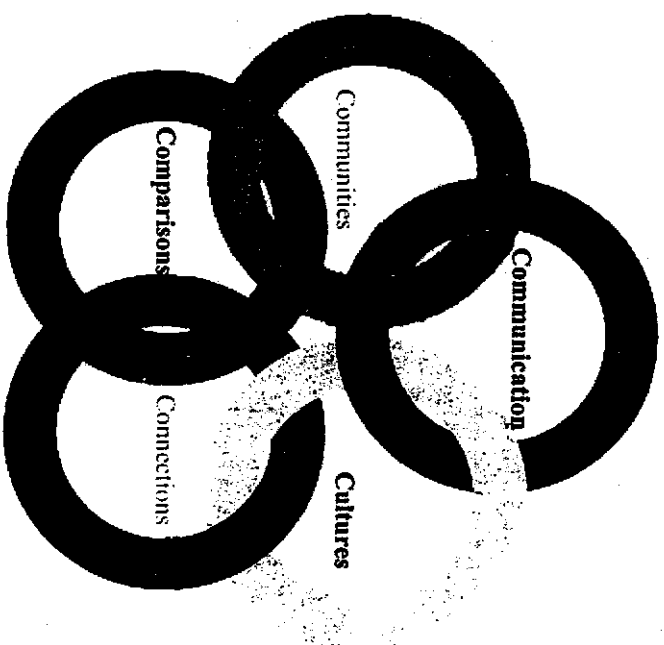
## Process and Promise

Language Learners of TOMORROW  
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## Bridges and Boundaries: Growing the Cross-Cultural Mind

Vicki Galloway

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*Yo soy yo y mi circunstancia.*

José Ortega y Gasset

**O**n the Mexican side of the Bridge of the Americas that both joins and separates El Paso and Juárez, a giant Mexican flag was recently erected to "remind the Mexican citizens that live here about our history and our laws" (to quote President Ernesto Zedillo). But the installation of this enormous flag sparked a furor among some El Paso residents, who then clamored for the raising of an even more massive Stars-and-Stripes on the U.S. side of the bridge. While the Mexican government claimed that the flag served to symbolize solidarity, cultural pride, and historical conscience—a drawing in of border cities to the collective heart of a nation, outraged El Paso residents measured the flagpole and called their local officials in protest. From one side of the border, the flag was viewed as an adversarial defiance of border-guarding efforts, a territorial encroachment, a burlesque of U.S. grandeur, a challenge to duel. From the other side came a different perspective (translated here):

Can't those El Paso residents see that the flag has nothing to do with them, nor with their city? As I see it, that gigantic Mexican flag only indicates

that, yes, Mexico is there, and isn't it beautiful? It's a matter of pride, folks. And when it comes to pride, Mexicans rank second to none. (Olivera, 1997)

Indignation was unleashed far from the border as well. A letter to the editor of an Atlanta newspaper responds to two questions posed in a previous issue of the newspaper: "Why are Americans so angry about this Mexican flag?" and "If we switched borders in this situation, would we find a Canadian flag so controversial?"

Concerning the flap over a 300-pound Mexican flag at the U.S. border, a letter writer ... says that if the flag were Canadian, there would be no controversy. The writer is comparing oranges and apples by comparing Canada, a country almost like ours, with a—let's face it—Third World country, from which so many of its citizens are flooding across our borders daily. (Lerch, 1997)

Lest one be tempted to characterize this controversy as a clash of cultural perspectives, it bears reminding that to experience such conflict one must be aware that another perspective exists. It is the assumption of sameness that triggers facile interpretation, immediate judgment, and turgid culture-ranking criteria. As Lévi-Strauss has stated, perhaps the true contribution of a culture consists precisely in its *difference* from others. He captures our mission as teachers of foreign languages and cultures:

The sense of gratitude and respect which each single member of a given culture can and should feel towards all others can only be based on the conviction that the other cultures differ from his own in countless ways, even if the ultimate essence of these differences eludes him or if, in spite of his best efforts, he can reach no more than an imperfect understanding of them. (1995, p. 7)

In the flag-raising story lie two metaphors to guide our classroom culture-teaching efforts: *bridges* and *boundaries*. Just as the Bridge of the Americas allows effortless movement of one's own cultural baggage across borders, in our classrooms, pre-fab culture bridges do not on their own expose or challenge pre-judgment of cultures, do not on their own lift the veil of ethnocentrism that impedes the perception of other values, perspectives, and patterns of thought. As they join the selected coordinates of two distinct realities, bridges blend and blur boundaries. We recognize these "bridges" in the foreign language classroom: our untiring efforts to summarize, describe, encapsulate, factualize, and sanitize a culture for boxed delivery to students. To tame and contain this tentacle creature, we present *highlights*; we deliver *impressions*: "The extended family is very important to Hispanics," "the French have five weeks of vacation per year," "Germans value order and structure." But while such generalizations may ring "true" from *our perspective*, they will never be

wholly accurate, since their real meaning simply cannot be accommodated by an *outsider's* frame of reference. Moreover, having no other sense-making system for the intake of these data, learners simply superimpose their own culture's template (Galloway, 1992, 1997).

Bridges of culture facts produce only fiction: not the *real* culture, but a hybrid warped in reference to our own; not its *internal* sense, but the sense we have given it; not its inner dynamic, but only the blips it displays on our own culture's radar screen. As Kramsch notes, "What we should seek in cross-cultural education are less bridges than a deep understanding of the boundaries. We can teach the boundary, we cannot teach the bridge" (1993, p. 228). It is precisely the boundaries, the defining edges of *separate realities* that we must have learners discover and negotiate as we guide them not only to enter the other culture *on its own terms*, but also to re-enter their own. And surely there is nothing easy, quick, efficient, or neat about this process.

In this chapter, "teaching" culture in the foreign language classroom will be viewed as growing the cross-cultural mind. Implicit in this view is a distinction between assessing the *products* of discrete performance and fostering the *process* of inquiry; between the rigidity of measurable *knowledge* and the flexibility of measurement-resistant ways of thinking; between delivering to the unquestioning student and eliciting from the reflective learner; and between classrooms directed toward the avoidance of conflict and those engaged in its recognition and negotiation. In their essay, "Maturing Outcomes," Costa and Garmston posit an authentic vision for continuous lifelong learning as one that reaches beyond the presentation of disparate facts or the performance of discrete activities to connect to broader transcendent meanings and processes, to tap the wellsprings or energy sources that create wonderment and fuel human thinking (1998). Indeed, our commitment to nurturing the cross-cultural mind may require reinvigorating energies and redirecting our focus from that of lower-level *instructional* mechanics to that of the "mature" *educational* outcomes, deep learning processes, and complex thinking traits that serve lifelong learning.

A true commitment to cross-cultural communication requires nothing less than an honest "paradigm shift" in our classroom construct of teaching culture. Rosado defines a paradigm shift as a movement away from taken-for-granted boundaries and old explanations that no longer capture reality to accommodate the emergence of a new way of thinking, valuing, and perceiving the world (1997). The publication of the *National Stand-*

*ards for Foreign Language Learning* (1996), a cluster of "broadly conceived purposes and objectives for language study" (Phillips, 1997, p. xii), claims to capture this paradigm shift and is perceived by some as the course that is "set" for foreign language educators (Jeffries, 1996). Indeed, one need only peruse the assorted "standards-based" curriculum guides and workshop announcements via the Internet to appreciate their enthusiastic reception in the foreign language teaching community. Yet, confusion persists in defining the place of culture in our language-teaching perspectives and practices: A standards-based workshop announcement, for example, bears the title "Culture as the Core," but describes the aim of the workshop as "*integrating culture into an established language curriculum.*"

National standards cannot be magic bridges to transport us beyond our own tired boundaries; they cannot guide our investment in the "mature" outcomes that are needed to grow cross-cultural minds. If standards merely entice us to tweak established curricula, if we respond to them by simply sandwiching in a new "culture unit around standard 2.2" or by dressing up old practices in the fashion of the moment, we will not have altered the cross-cultural landscape of foreign language education. As Rosado (1997) cautions, we cannot become what we need to be by re-maining what we are.

This chapter will use the broad goal areas of the National Standards as vantage points from which to derive a new vision of cross-cultural education in the belief that "whether the goal is Communication, Connections, Comparisons, or Communities, Cultures are the recurring subtext" (Schwartz & Kavanagh, 1997, p. 99). Along the way we will hear the voices of emerging cross-cultural minds as classroom learners negotiate the boundaries of other realities and construct their own bridges of understanding. These learner voices reveal the very personal and individual process of cross-cultural learning. These voices tell us what is authentic and real about cross-cultural conflict, and they *teach us* how to be, first and foremost, teachers of culture.

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## Culture as "Products, Practices, and Perspectives"

"Culture is not one thing. I'm starting to believe it's everything."

"Mac," second-year Spanish student

A sign in the elevator of a (presumably reputable) Paris hotel, reads "Please leave your values at the front desk." By its somewhat jarring error, the sign reminds us that meaning is not in words but in minds. To share a language—a culture—is to share assumptions of meaning. A most difficult lesson for foreign language learners is precisely that of assumption and expectation: Because they are parts of different sense-making systems, words from one language do not have facile or entirely reliable counterparts in another; indeed, they may codify meanings or clusters of meanings in one culture that are entirely alien to another. Foreign words that appear conceptually straightforward or even formally similar to those of another language and culture may bundle entirely different ranges and fields of significance. While within one's own frame of reference, one's own language seems sensible and cohesive, it will likely appear arbitrary and chaotic to the outsider who lives a different reality. For this reason, as *language* teachers, we guide learners to make sense of the new language by discovering its own internal patterns; we guide them to *construct* a system of communication separate and unblended with their own.

But language is only part of the communication system called culture. Language thrives only through the lifeblood of culturally shared meanings, perceptions, and values. This same process of construction, then, is required in our approach to teaching culture for, just as in language, one culture's "logic" is not accessible through another culture's values. Indeed, perhaps the Paris hotel sign should be hung in our own classrooms for, in a culture-learning context, its unintentional message takes on new significance: "This is an other-culture construction site. Please leave your values at the front desk."

The *National Standards for Foreign Language Learning* include two broad goal statements that represent culture learning as the development of an understanding of the practices and products of a culture in terms of the perspectives of the culture that creates and maintains them. These products, practices, and perspectives roughly correspond to Wells's categorization of the "resources" (1994) and Even-Zohar's "repertoire" of a

culture (1997). While at the literal level, the *Standards* invoke relationships between practices and perspectives and between products and perspectives, the undercurrent of these statements is that of meaningful interdependence. Indeed, to limit classroom culture teaching to the display or presentation of a culture's products, such as a food item or a musical piece, or to isolate practices, such as greetings or dining customs, or to focus solely on perspectives through impressions and generalizations, is to remove threads from a fabric—once loosened and separated they become insignificant or, worse, connect unnaturally in learners' minds to form grotesque patterns. As one teacher remarked:

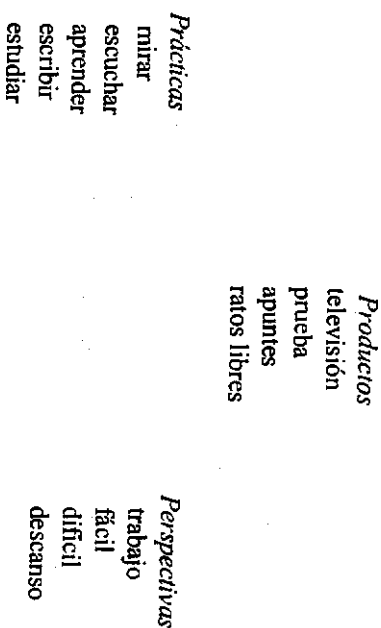
... my students do not seem to be impacted by the cultural information being presented. They are not able to identify with the cultural information because although it may be interesting, it is not relevant to them, and what cultural information they do learn seems to come off as trivial knowledge that has little effect on them or their lives. (Schwartz and Kavanaugh, 1997, p. 105)

Perhaps our mission itself requires a context shift: from "I teach language (and culture if there's time)" to "I teach *culture*, through the tools of its language." Indeed, if we take as our primary mission the development of cross-cultural communication, the language will lend its adaptability, versatility, and malleability to every learning context. A language agenda where culture never fits will be exchanged for a culture agenda where language is the currency. And just as we would never think of teaching language by simply handing students a dictionary, we cannot think of teaching culture as "presenting" students discrete products or practices. Cross-cultural minds are grown from the inside. If our aim is to develop the traits of reflection, introspection, and critical analysis, our efforts will focus on nurturing self-direction in the individual (see also Wenden, this volume). Thus, the repertoire of product, practice, and perspective is not limited to teacher lesson plans but should be shared with learners as their own resource for cross-cultural observation, inquiry, reflection, and discovery.

For learners to observe a culture critically, they must be given the tools from the beginning (see Galloway, 1992, for activities that foster cross-cultural discovery and connection in the foreign language classroom). During the second week of a first-year, first-quarter Spanish class, for example, students were taught the words *producto*, *práctica*, *perspectiva* as tools for observing their own culture and others. In their first assignment with these tools, they were to write the title "Mi cultura" at the top of the page and, under the heading "Productos," to choose from their

textbook vocabulary the words for at least four things they would consider "products" (television, quiz, notes, free time, etc.). They then listed words related to these products under the category of either "Prácticas" (e.g., listening, learning, watching, writing, studying) or "Perspectivas" (e.g., easy, difficult, work, rest), as in Figure 1. When they had completed their lists, they were to draw as many connecting lines as possible to capture their own associations of products to practices, practices to perspectives, perspectives to products, and so on. As anticipated, a task the students initially thought would be easy, ultimately produced frustration, with lines crossing over, superimposing, circling so many other lines that many students remarked apologetically, "You won't be able to read this. Can I copy it over?"

Figure 1. *Mi cultura*



Indeed, these students had just learned their first lesson about the "messiness" of culture. They were reminded that these three aspects are a way of looking at a culture and that they had just looked at their own. In a paired task, they were then to take two of the "products" and devise statements to explain their connecting lines, with the sole requirement that each statement begin either with *Aquí...* ("Here ...") or *En mi cultura...* While their linguistic tools were very limited at this earliest stage of learning, their personal messages came through clearly: "Aquí, mirar televisión y estudiar es difícil (fácil)." "Aquí, televisión es descanso y necesito aprender." "Aquí, necesito estudiar con (sin) televisión." "Aquí, no hay televisión, hay trabajo." "Aquí, en clase, televisión es aprender, no descanso." "No mirar televisión es fácil (difícil)." Their statements illustrated

not only the wealth of variations of products in practice and the changing nature of products in use, but the changing nature of all components according to the constellation. Aspects of their own "U.S. student culture" surfaced as well: The linkage of the product *television* with the practice of *studying*, either as an aid or an intrusion; the conflict of *rest* or *leisure* with the obligation to *work*; the distinction between *learning* and *free time*. Their final task was to convert their statements into questions for interviewing five classmates. And from classmates' responses, they summarized the variety of individual preferences that exist among the options generated by a people. These learner-generated data allowed the formation of some conclusions, recorded in simple Spanish on the board and copied in students' "culture-learning notebooks":

- *En una cultura, un producto ≠ una práctica ≠ una perspectiva.*
- *Una cultura = gente y personas* ("the group and the individual")

One additional, critical, cross-cultural observation surfaced in this particular lesson with beginning students: the difficulty of expressing the meanings of one culture through the code of another. A student observed: "*¿Trabajo es una perspectiva? ¿Es un producto? ¿Es una práctica?*" ("Is 'work' a perspective, a product, or a practice?"). Indeed, the word "work," saturated with the sense of U.S. culture, evokes all of these: a product, a practice, a moral principle, a "doing" way of seeing the world. Students were asked to brainstorm the ways we use the word "work" in English: A machine, an idea *works*; one *works* out to exercise but also *works* out a plan, *works* up a sweat, *works* off the pounds, *works* it all into his schedule; he can *work* something loose, *work* someone hard, *work* on someone to change his mind, *work* up to a confession, even order a hamburger with *the works*. Yet, as students would discover in subsequent lessons, the words *trabajo* and *trabajar*, while dictionary translations of "work," neither extend the same ranges or fields of meaning nor codify the same constructs. Words are products of their cultures. And cultures are different. On the board was written a third statement:

- *Un idioma es el producto de su cultura. Una cultura ≠ otra cultura ∴ un idioma ≠ otro idioma*

As students then "entered" the Hispanic world through authentic texts that carried its voices, their culture-processing tools were applied, sharpened, conceptually refined. Moreover, learners began to own these tools;

as one student expressed in her course evaluation, they became the "curse" of their cultural complacency.

## Products and Goods

Products are all that a culture conceives, creates, or uses to mediate activity; they may be material (clothing, shelter, transportation, food, tools, literature, etc.) or abstract (ideas, rules, norms, laws, organizational structures, modes of thought and expression, and so on). Without doubt, the most powerful and versatile of a culture's products, the "master product" that mediates all others, is language. But, like language, all products are codified, symbolic in some sense, as they arise from and are embedded in their culture's own distinctive "web of significance" (Geertz, 1973, p. 4). Products, or artifacts, in their constant social processes of construction, consumption, and negotiation, connect humans to each other within the loosely shared associational framework that is their culture's reality. Indeed, even though we may casually remark that a person is a "product" of his or her culture, we recognize that persons are not merely products of a culture, but also its constructive participants, "actively creating a world that is always in the process of creating them" (Gover & Conway, 1997).

At even the earliest levels of foreign language learning we may guide students' entrance into another culture using the notion of "product" to plant the seeds of cross-cultural inquiry and the strategic habits that encourage complex thought and reflection. Artifact-study techniques, for example, use a common cultural product to elicit an exhaustive list of questions and then share speculations: What is it made of? What is it similar to? Where, how is it used? Who is its user? Where is it found (*not* found)? What is its value, significance? and so on. Such techniques, aside from developing good habits of inquiry, hypothesis formation, and divergent thinking, encourage learners to see products not as mere objects, but as meaning-and context-driven tools that function in systems where everything is connected. A simple styrofoam coffee cup, for example, can be used to generate thinking not only about the connectedness of one's own U.S. culture, but about the perspectives that drive and align this system of connections. In a first-year Spanish class, the styrofoam cup was used to help students capture the U.S. thought-and-action network that embeds the notion of "disposability" as pre-reading for a series of authentic Hispanic texts that exposed a different perspective on the notion of

"worn goods"—one reflected in the practices of repair, renovation, conversion, recycling. In a second-year Spanish class discussing cities, environment, and public welfare, it was used to capture U.S. "lifestyle" in terms of the perspectives that power it and the products and practices that support it and ensure its perpetuation. Following up a Hispanic newspaper article on "garbageology," students were instructed to analyze one aspect of U.S. culture through the styrofoam coffee cup. A glance at some essay titles reveals, via just one artifact, the intricate connections between U.S. issues of time, health, mobility, environment, and consumption habits.

*Conducir con mi taza de poliestireno* ["Driving with my Styrofoam Cup"]; *Rápido. Tengo prisa* ["Make it Fast! I'm in a Hurry"]; *Así comemos y así morremos* ["As We Eat, So We Die"]; *Lecciones de salud en una pequeña taza* ["Health Lessons in a Little Cup"]; *¿Botar o reciclar?* ["To Toss or Recycle?"]; *En el año 2050 se ve la misma taza* ["In 2050 the Same Cup Is Seen"]; *Mi basura y yo* ["My Trash and I"]

In an intermediate-level Business Spanish class, students played the roles of market analysts for a styrofoam cup manufacturer that wished to sell the product in Latin America. Their task was to explain in detail, citing specific evidence, why it would or would not "sell" within these cultures, with each student presenting a different aspect of the argument. In each of these cases, a product was used to help learners define what it means *to be* within their boundaries, to see systemic aspects of their own culture and claim its ownership, to reach into their culture to pull out something whose roots resist separation. In each of these cases, the notion of "product" was not as simple as it seemed.

Among those things that a culture considers its products, Even-Zohar distinguishes those that are "tools" from those that are perceived as "goods" by the culture (1997). Goods are a culture's properties, both tangible and intangible, that are valued as indicators of status or prestige. While one culture's concrete "good" may be a private swimming pool, another's may be running water. While one culture's abstract good may be durable friendship, another's may be self-sufficiency. The potential for *acquiring* goods is likewise defined by the culture that proclaims their value: While one culture may reference the acquisition potential of these goods *outside* the realm of individual control, in decree of fate or birth-right, another may reference it *outside* the individual but *inside* the force of the collective, and still another may reference it *entirely inside* the individual and thus conclude that these goods lie within reach of all those who are willing to exert the *effort*. So powerful are these notions that, indeed, those whose views differ will not "speak the same language." As

Even-Zohar notes, one culture's notion of valued products is not only non-exportable, it is intrinsically judgmental:

Goods which cannot be evaluated by an established market cannot have value and therefore are not marked as "culture." Therefore, social entities may be labeled as "having no culture" by other social entities, if diagnosed as not being in possession of the required and acknowledged set of goods. (1997, p. 20)

In the attempt to avoid such judgment, classroom teachers may shy away from all but bland, U.S.-conforming images of other cultures; in response to teachers, textbook publishers may use non-controversial stock photos that depict not "middle-class" in context, but what middle class *looks like* to U.S. students. Yet, we cannot guide learners to examine their own "product-goods" mind-set, much less achieve mature understanding of another, if we present only illusions in fear of the "conflict" or judgment that may arise from authentic images. A class of second-year Spanish students was shown two photos of a Salvadoran family at home: one of the family gathered around the dinner table, the other of a mother and daughter hanging laundry on a line in back of their house. Students were given 30 seconds to look at the photos and then write down *one impression*, supported by the particular observations or evidence that fed the impression. The following typical response (translated here) captures the students' -observers' perception of "poverty" as the *absence of expected* products.

**Impression:** It's a poor family.

**Evidence:** There is no refrigerator, no washing machine. The stove is very small. There are lots of calendars on the wall. There are no rooms, only curtains to separate. Water for washing clothes and dishes is in "bowls" outside. The light is small [there is little light?]. The bathroom is outdoors.

For the majority of these students, "looking for" had replaced "seeing." In follow-up to this first observation task, they were asked to discuss what *they* would feel like being there: Would they be uncomfortable? Why or why not? Those who answered "yes," invariably cited the outdoor toilet. Many commented on how much work would be involved in maintaining a household without plumbing. Students were then asked to observe the photos again, now describing what was *there* instead of what was "missing." This time they were able to see the products (material and abstract) valued by the family itself: the carefully tended flowers that blossomed in pots in the back yard; the pictures on the calendars tacked to the walls (a mother reading to her child, the Last Supper, a family at dinner, angels, a nature scene); the snapshots of a young girl in a white dress, two small children smiling; the tidy array of water basins

and the immaculateness of the home; the family sharing in dinner conversation, the mother and daughter helping each other at work. Then they were shown the note handwritten on the back of one of the photos. It was from the *señora* of this Salvadoran family and read in Spanish: "This is my mansion." As a homework assignment, students were given the following writing task: "Write a letter to this Salvadoran family describing your 'mansion.' Before writing, think about what you learned from class discussion and your own observations of the family in the photo: What will you focus on in your description?"

## Practices and Perspectives

Viewing a culture solely in terms of observable products presents a dangerous perception trap, for the invention and implementation of all forms of product reside in *practice* or activity. In a very real sense, products have no meaning out of the context of activity. But just as the notion of "product" is not confined to tangible objects, the notion of "practice" is not confined to physical or observable action. *Practice* refers to the human activity that simultaneously codifies and decodes the products. In isolation, neither products nor practices can inform. By the same token, no observation of products in practice will inform *solely* about one aspect of the culture, for as there is no simple, one-to-one relationship between *product* and meaning, there is no such simple relationship between *practice* and meaning or between *product* and *practice*—all are intricately and intimately connected.

It is often the seemingly so familiar that most perplexes, for perceived familiarity tempts the observer to infuse his own culture's associational framework. In Hispanic cultures, the cluster of practices embedded in the familiar context of job application is a typical example: U.S. Spanish students studying hiring practices in the Hispanic world are often quick to judge Hispanic job advertising as "discriminatory" in its obvious specification of sex, age, marital status, or physical appearance; likewise with résumé requirements of photo, birth date, and professions of the applicant's parents. In job-interview simulations where, as in the Hispanic world, questions are not confined to an applicant's educational and professional credentials but may probe any aspect of the applicant's "total person," students are invariably startled to receive a question regarding their "personal" lives ("You can't ask that") and often become uncomfortable when pushed to respond. Into these Hispanic hiring and job-seeking contexts, learners typically infuse their own culture's notions of "public" and "private," assume their own culture's "invisible doors" and, not

finding them, judge Hispanic practices as unfair, exclusionary, indiscreet, invasive.

In the first weeks of a first-year Spanish class, this theme of "invisible doors" was explored in preparation for a unit on self description, careers, and job-seeking based on authentic Hispanic documents. To first examine the meanings associated with closed vs. open doors, students surveyed each other in groups of four and summarized to the class their group's responses to the following questions: *When is your door closed? When is it open? What does a closed/open door mean?* Responses indicated that students closed doors for concentration, contemplation, private conversation, and modesty—in other words, to *separate* themselves from others; they opened them to invite, meet, display—in other words, to *involve* themselves with others. Yet, when asked the *meaning* of a closed or open door, students confronted their own conflict of needs: While opening or closing a door is a neutral action, seeing an open or closed door evokes judgment. The need for privacy thus conflicts with the need not to be judged by others as antisocial, timid, standoffish.

¿Cuándo está cerrada la puerta de tu dormitorio?

Necesito (Tengo que) estudiar/ leer/trabajar. Voy a practicar español; Tengo una prueba. No quiero ser sociable; No quiero conversar; No puedo escuchar/pensar. Soy desordenado; Necesito descansar. Tengo que pensar; Necesito dormir; No tengo ropa; Necesito hablar por teléfono; etc.

¿Cuándo está abierta la puerta de tu dormitorio?

Quiero conversar; Me gusta tocar la guitarra y cantar con la puerta abierta; Quiero ser sociable; Quiero amigos; Hay una fiesta; Quiero conocer gente; No tengo que estudiar/leer/hacer tarea; en mis ratos libres; Quiero jugar; Quiero escuchar música; etc.

¿Qué significa una puerta abierta?

Amigoso, sociable, extrovertido, alegre, divertido; fiesta, descanso; jugar; entrar; etc.

¿Qué significa una puerta cerrada?

Reservado, tímido, introvertido, antipático; estudioso, serio, trabajador; desordenado, responsable; no entrar; trabajo; etc.

These U.S. notions of "private" vs. "public" were expanded from the concrete to the intangible as students brainstormed on the existence of "invisible doors" in their culture. As anticipated, students produced "doors" between student life and career, private and social life (*yo y otros*), personal and professional life. Students even insisted there is not *one* door between a person and his or her professional life, but a se-



ries—private to personal to social to professional. As students then approached the voices of the Hispanic workplace through its own job-application documents, they noticed in this world not only the absence of their own privacy-and-separation “doors” but also the presence of other, unexpected ones. They were reminded that our doors are our culture’s products, constructed to satisfy values and perceived needs. Not only will these needs and values differ from one culture to another but, as students had noted in this activity, even within a culture itself, they are likely to be in constant tension.

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**... to cross [our boundaries] we must define them. We must know where we are “coming from” in order to discover a “new” place.**

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A people’s own ways of viewing the world, its *perspectives*, propel the creation of products and practices and align them as a cohesive sense-making system. A culture’s perspectives express how what is done or believed functions in the whole of life. Yet, within this sense-making system, among its creators and consumers, the meeting of minds will never be total or exact. Its internal diversity (age, gender, geographical region, socio-economic strata, ethnicity, national origin, language, religion, etc.), as well as its internal groupings of sub-cultures or co-cultures prohibit its capture through a single scenario or static snapshot. As vibrant systems in constant flux, in constant surprise at their own internal diversity and in constant negotiation of their own self-produced tensions and internally generated conflicts, cultures do not run smoothly. “Conflict” is culture’s pressure valve and growth mechanism. It is through conflict that all change and learning take place—in the collision of points of view that unsettles complacency, in the encounter of the new that requires re-framing of the old, in the clash between one practice that can only be forwarded at the expense of another.

Our culture’s perspectives offer ranges of options; they are our generative capacity. Yet, because they also bind our vision and limit our understanding, they are the boundaries we must cross to enter another culture. To cross them, we must define them. We must know where we are “coming from” in order to discover a “new” place.

## Culture Learning as Comparisons and Connections

*“Cross-cultural learning means ... learning in a class where there are people of different backgrounds and cultures, [and] learning about a subject and ... how it relates differently to different cultures.”*

Matt, third-year student

For language teachers committed to cross-cultural communication it is perhaps fostering the believability of otherness that represents the ultimate challenge, for people tend to see what they believe rather than believe what they see (Joy, 1990). Words and deeds of another people, if not experienced and interpreted within the cultural context that assigns their meaning, may merely attach themselves to the outside observer’s own sense-making system, neither touching his notion of self, nor inviting understanding of “other.” Thus, while one’s own culture has texture, is supremely complex and basically indescribable, the other culture remains a static collection of quirky little life forms, simple and without definition. Indeed, a culture can become believable only if we are able to capture a notion of what it is to be from the other perspective.

In this endeavor, the two words “connection” and “comparison” may be our touchstones. The *National Standards* characterize these two goal areas as connection with other disciplines and development of insight into the nature of language and culture. However, here we will push them a bit farther, pull them a bit deeper, to view them as the very heart of the process of cross-cultural understanding, where *comparison* is the application of cognitive and affective strategies to generate experiential analogues or metaphors, and where *connection* is the learning process of feeding known into new, and of expanding and broadening through multiple perspectives.

### The Assumption of Difference

The question “Is there such a thing as U.S. culture?” commonly evokes a “yes but no” response from students. The “yes” is invariably supported by the recitation of beliefs embodied in U.S. historical documents and in the tenets of capitalism. The “no” arises as students conclude: “We’re not really one culture, but many” or “There are cultures within cultures.” Be-

ing the insider thus affords a special perspective and cautions us that perhaps the age-old culture-teaching debate of *similarity* vs. *difference* may not be productive. As human meets the world there are similarities in basic need; yet, the perception and weight of these needs are culturally formed. Aspects of systems designed to meet these needs may seem similar; yet, their particular realizations and coordinates will offer a *unique* reality in delicate and dramatic ways. With this understanding we may flesh out a "meaning" of *comparison* for use in the cross-cultural laboratory of our classrooms. Webster's *Unabridged Dictionary* provides the important distinction that we compare things of the same class *with* each other but compare things of unlike classes *to* each other. Because assumption of likeness permits one culture to leech into another in the interpretation of observations, it is the assumption of difference that needs to be our point of departure. The challenge of neutralizing this notion of difference, of defusing the potential explosion of judgment, may perhaps be met through the word "unique."

## Owning a Cultural Identity

In a third-year literature class devoted to the theme of "identity," the word *yo* ("I") was written on the board and students were given one minute to create a list of all the things that composed their identity. To expand their personal lists and thus create a more culture-representative sampling, items were shared and merged into a class composite, with tallies representing the number of times each was mentioned (the time limit was imposed to capture a sense of individual priorities). The class list was then analyzed for frequency of response.

1. *education* (major, courses, school, academic organizations)
2. *goals* (goals, plans, dreams)
3. *work and work related aspects* (job, profession, position, etc.)
4. *abilities and preferred activities* (with sports most frequent)
5. *material goods* (car, house, clothing, salary, etc.)
6. *genetic factors* (race, sex, age, appearance)
7. *personality traits* (honesty, humor, etc.)
8. *friends, fraternities, and sororities*
9. *family* (parents, siblings, pets)
10. *religion*

This list would be used throughout the course to help learners claim ownership of their own culture's notion of "identity" as they entered the world of Hispanic

voices. For now, it allowed the class to make some interesting observations: (1) their notion of "identity" as beginning with independent Self (self-development through education) and *future orientation* in personal goals and aspirations; (2) the status of work as a definer of Self, and the emphasis on *doing* in abilities and activities; (3) the relatively high ranking of material goods as rewards and signifiers of personal achievement. Students noted that the first seven categories were related to individual attributes, with friends, family (defined as parents, siblings, and pets) as less immediate identifiers. Nationality, culture, ancestry, language, politics were not mentioned by the U.S. students; however, they ranked as primary components on the lists of the four *foreign* students in the class (two from France, two from India), all of whom had been in the U.S. at least three years. One of these students explained that being a *foreigner* in the U.S. took a prominent place in her identity, marking her difference: "*Aquí, mi cultura y mi lengua son una gran parte de mi identidad porque aquí, soy diferente.*" Indeed, it was this very comment and the discussion that ensued that prompted an on-the-spot re-ordering of the original syllabus in order to explore the notion of *bicultural* identity.

## Separating "Mine" from "Yours"

In the autobiographical poem, "Convocación de palabras," the Chicano writer Tino Villanueva chronicles his search for "freedom" in the creation and expression of his own identity and that of his people. Because he is not of one culture, but of two, he "means" not in one language, but in two, and his voice must be that of both. Beginning with the line "*Yo no era mio todavía*" (I wasn't mine yet) the poet recounts his self-evolution as he labors to control the "writer's" words in English in order to express the duality of his identity. He feels his own Self forming through the power of each word and, in the final verse, spells his freedom:

Tenaz oficio/ el de crearme en mi propia imagen/ cada vez con cada una al  
pronunciarla:  
posteriormente  
subsecuentemente  
y de escribir por fin con voluntad/las calorces letras de mi nombre/y por  
encima/la palabra  
liberada.<sup>1</sup>

The poem was read in class and students were simply asked to write their own personal reaction as homework. While ordinarily a pre-reading task would have been used to elicit some analogical experience that would orient learners to the message and guide cross-cultural entry, this time students were given only a simple question: "What is 'identity' to this

U.S. writer of Mexican origin?" The omission of the pre-reading task was purposeful: Previous class experience had shown that learners typically "misread" this poem; however, it was precisely the misreadings that always produced the learners' deepest self-reflections on their own approaches to Otherness—awareness of the infusion of their own values, prominence of their own stereotypes, quickness of their own judgment. Indeed, in reacting to this poem, many students, viewing the writer as a foreigner, interpreted his examples of English-learning as the typical struggles of the immigrant; they interpreted his insertions of word lists either as signs of the difficulty of English or as indicators of the high standards that prevail in U.S. schools (although few students could define all these English words and confessed that they had never even seen some of them). They then skipped to the final word, *libertad*, and saw this, the word that captured for them the essence of their own culture, as meaning that the poet wanted to be "one of us." One student comment, translated here, reflects some of these misreadings:

The poem is about a Mexican who, on coming to the U.S., struggles with the English language. He finds schools much harder here and has a difficult time coping with the higher standards he encounters. He thinks that by learning big words he will be more like us and fit in and that becoming a part of U.S. culture will spell his "liberty."

Students' reactions to the poem revealed that many were viewing the Mexican-American identity issues almost entirely in terms of "U.S. culture assimilation," of a battle between wanting to fit into mainstream U.S. culture—"wanting what we have"—and feeling rejected. In follow-up discussion, they confessed to not understand the identity issues confronted by those who negotiate membership in two cultures. One of the French students in the class offered her assessment of what it is like to live in another culture—to be the same yet different, to have essentially "two lives" that shift back and forth in consciousness, according to the situation, to be the same person but also "different."

Students were asked to reflect on personal situations in which they had felt "different" or out of place (How did they feel? Why?) and, using Villanueva's poem as a framework, compose their own poem to reflect this very personal experience. Our formal approach to the personal, social, and political identity of the "Chicano" then began with Rosaura Sánchez's short story "Se arregangó las mangas," in which a Mexican American professor, initially taken for a waiter at a cocktail party, "sells out" his identity and people in order to fit into the mainstream. In follow-up, students were asked to consider the extent to which we in the U.S. give an identity to Mexican Americans, and by association, to Hispanics in gen-

eral, that is not their own. To what extent are observed "differences" interpreted and judged as reversed images of ourselves, the negatives to our own positives? Students brainstormed stereotyped images of Mexicans in the U.S.—images that have spilled over to mold caricatures of Hispanics in general: poor, always late, too many children, immature, poorly dressed, uneducated, etc. They then turned to their "U.S. identity" lists to see if these judgments could be coming from their own values system. In a task that required them to link these stereotypes to their own associations in one sentence (with each clause joined by *lo que* ["which"]), they experienced the chain reaction of their own culture's meaning system, the freight of their own values:

"No puntual" significa que no es responsable, *lo que* significa que no tiene motivación, *lo que* significa que no tiene metas, *lo que* significa que no tiene interés en el futuro, *lo que* significa que es inmaduro.

"Pobre" significa que no tiene dinero, *lo que* significa que no tiene muchas cosas, *lo que* significa que no tiene educación, *lo que* significa que trabaja con las manos, *lo que* significa que nunca va a tener éxito.<sup>2</sup>

Another poem by Villanueva was then read and discussed in class in light of this judgment trap. "Que hay otra voz" depicts the struggles of the Mexican migrant worker and, through the use of code-switching (insertion of English words), invokes the presence of one culture living in the midst of another. Class discussion teased out contrastive notions between two cultures: time, man and nature, "home" and work, material and non-material "goods," as well as the condition of being of one culture (*ser*) and living in another (*estar*). Students were then asked to prepare a dramatic presentation of the poem to attach a living experience to the idea conveyed by the title ("There is another voice"). Their task was first to collaborate in teasing from the poem those voices that originated from the Anglo culture and those that originated from the Mexican immigrant. (For a discussion of the "voices" of authentic texts, see Galloway, 1997.) This task required students to separate the conditions and circumstances of the immigrant's U.S. residence (as well as the outsider's perception of him in this residence) from the Mexican and his culture. Once they had separated the voices, they presented their dramatic reading, with the U.S. voice uttered in unison by the full force of the thirteen "Anglo-culture" students; the immigrant voices uttered separately by the five other students, as depicted in the following excerpt (lines should be read horizontally from Anglo to Chicano voice).

U.S. "Anglo" voice, in unison

Chicano voice, solo

Horarios inalterables ...

... la madrugada

mecánicamente despierta el reloj de

lumbre ...

... (¿de qué tamaño es el tiempo?)

Tú, comotellanas, ...

... mexicano, latino,

Mexkin, skin, Mex-guy, Mex-Am, Latin-

American, Mexican American, ...

... Chicano,

tú, de los ojos tibios ...

... como el color de la tierra,

tú, de los blue-jeans nuevos pareces

retornar cada año ...

... como fuerza elemental,

temporal-

... arraigado entre el ser y el estar de ...

... un itinerario

Eres ganapán, ...

... estás aquí de paso.

... pesas

tu saco de algodón — cien libras

que en los sábados ...

... se convierten en pesos miserables.<sup>3</sup>

These immigrant voices had depicted a different being from the one captured by Anglo-culture judgment: one living in a cyclical time frame; one united with the earth and Nature's forces; one warned by the company of his own, his family, his music; one whose bowed and soiled body planted and harvested the crops of another's land; one viewed by the "other" as a commodity but viewed by himself through the "elemental force" of his Mexican roots, his Chicano brotherhood.

Many of the issues of Chicano identity illustrate the pitfalls of the decontextualized comparison of one culture with another. Members of one culture living in another, Mexican migrant workers were observed by those of the dominant culture in terms of contrasts of appearance and surface-level behaviors. Their situations having placed them outside the sense-making context of their own culture, they appeared not as the norm, but as the anomaly; their valued products and practices, observed outside the internal logic of the culture that created them, were subject to an outsider-imposed meaning. Indeed, as Castañeda notes, it is the *etic* perspective (that of the outsider looking in) that causes Mexico itself to seem so opaque to the beholder from abroad, that renders the foreign regard "so distorted, so blind, so mistaken":

The advent of a "modern" Mexico—business-oriented, outward-looking, sympathetic to most things American—blurred the contours of a different Mexico: one that, despite the convergence of ideas among the elites of both nations, remained profoundly different from the United States, and capable of generating the very surprises that have cropped up in the past couple of years. (1995, p. 24)

It was this Mexico, "profoundly different from the United States," that we sought to explore on its own terms. While debating the themes of U.S.-Mexico relations helps learners clarify their own perspectives, such debates often stay behind U.S. boundaries, divorced from the Mexican reality. To reach beyond present explanations and conjectures, the students in this class required more information—contemporary data to expand the literary voices of writers we would study in class: Octavio Paz, Carlos Fuentes, Rosario Castellanos, and others. Using the theme of the Mexican migrant as an investigative axis, students divided themselves into groups according to their area of interest or specialty and chose their own research perspectives: One group chose the economic perspective, one chose the political perspective, and another chose the socio-historical perspective. Others chose to work individually, researching such issues as family, health, and urbanization. Each group was to teach an audience-friendly lesson (in Spanish) of no more than 15 minutes. Their presentation was to offer some insights to the group that would help explain Mexican migration from the Mexican perspective and end with a provocative question for the group. Because only authentic Mexican texts (readily available via the Internet) were used as sources, the results of their research revealed the complex interconnectedness of all the issues raised. Indeed, because all aspects of a culture are inherently connected, any one theme—in this case, the Mexican migrant—can be the wedge that raises cultural roots for observation. In their exploration of Mexican identity, students had encountered not one identity, but many. And their journey into *México profundo* had barely begun.

The study of Mexican identity in this literature course occupied a full four weeks, with the learners themselves setting course direction through their own interaction. Their questions and comments in one task exposed threads of thought requiring connection. Their interests and fields of expertise propelled their interdisciplinary research as well. Indeed, the time taken to explore the web of one culture provided a deeper understanding of its internal logic while encouraging the development and refinement of durable and transferable strategies of cross-cultural examination. The opportunity to enter a culture more fully through literary and journalistic sources, interdisciplinary perspectives, and constant dialogue

afforded perhaps a more unique portrait than could be obtained by a "representative" sampling of Hispanic literary works. And for students carrying the deceptive notion of "Hispanic" as one people, it was a powerful lesson in the distinctiveness of each Hispanic culture. Indeed, for language teachers committed to teaching culture, a constant multi-disciplinary and multi-genre perspective is required, for the real picture of a culture does not emerge solely through its language and literature.

What insights had learners gained from this experience? One student commented:

Mexico seems to be not one culture, but many.... I suppose you could say there's no real mass society in the U.S. either, but there is in a way, because there is a concept of middle class by which we characterize our values, but it's hardly the same concept at all in Mexico and this explains a lot ... [I'm] beginning to see pieces fit together like a puzzle and make sense ("from the inside," as you say)—issues of "class," health, urbanization, ethnicity, politics, women and family, language (!)... Then again, everything we read just seems to make the picture more complex.... Now, we're really getting into the idea of Mexican identity, or Mexican *search* for identity, and I can really see the enormous weight of history in this. In the U.S. we ignore our history. It's like, "well it's over, time to move on." Mexicans live their history every day.

## Connecting and Comparing: The Kluckhohn Model

The final week of this third-year literature class focusing on "Hispanic identity" was devoted to helping students tie the patterns they had discovered through authentic Hispanic voices into a more cohesive system of values. In this regard, the schematic model developed by the anthropologists Florence Kluckhohn and Frederick Strodtbeck (1976), presented in Figure 2, allowed connected observations and broad system comparison. In the Kluckhohn taxonomy, a culture's dominant values and accepted ranges of variation may be seen as its system of options and preferred responses to five basic problems presumed to be shared across cultures: (1) perception of human nature, (2) perception of man in nature, (3) temporal orientation, (4) mode of activity, and (5) relational orientation. Rather than categorize cultures in static caricature, the model is fluid and dynamic, allowing the visualization not only of a culture's dominant preferences (A over B over C, A+B over C, etc.) at a given point in its story, but of its variant tensions and its reordered preferences over time. For each of the five basic problems (listed vertically), there are ranges of preference (listed horizontally). Orruño notes that all alternatives are present in all societies at all times, but are differentially preferred (1991).

Figure 2. The Kluckhohn Model of Value Orientations and Ranges of Variation

Human nature	Evil	Neutral	Good and evil	Good
Man and nature	Subjugation to nature	Harmony with nature	Mastery over nature	
Temporal	Past	Present	Future	
Activity	Being	Being-in-Becoming	Doing	
Relational	Lineality	Collaterality	Latality	
	(Authoritarian)	(Collectivist)	(Egalitarian)	

By connecting their own observations through the Kluckhohn model, learners were able to see the vast systemic differences between "white middle-class U.S. culture" and the Hispanic cultures whose voices they had analyzed through the class readings. Indeed, summarizing the alignment of the U.S. values system nearly straight down the right side of the taxonomy, Orruño notes that the composite of the U.S. values orientation puts it in the minority of the world's cultures and serves as a good predictor of where potential conflicts might lie as students cross their own cultural boundaries (1991). The orientation of Hispanic cultures tending toward the left and middle of the taxonomy displays vast differences between the two preferred-values systems.

Mainstream U.S. culture, for example, with its emphasis on change and innovation, experience and experiment, autonomy, self-control, and constant striving, caused students to orient U.S.-culture views of *Human nature* toward the "man is basically good" belief system. Recognizing that "Hispanic" covers many cultures, students tentatively noted a Hispanic tendency toward human nature as a mixture of *Good and evil*, where a belief in the goodness of humanity is tempered by preferences for correct thinking, respect for authority, and learning by principles. Indeed, Orruño contends that Hispanics tend to view humanity as good and evil, depending on circumstances, and use a very "person-centered" set of criteria that takes into account not only the inner dignity and uniqueness of individuals, but also their social status and social interaction. (1991, p. 453). Students had no difficulty orienting U.S. culture toward the *Mastery over nature* values system, where Nature is perceived as external and subordinate to man. In sharp contrast to the "control" outlook of U.S. culture, an "accepting" outlook was seen as permeating many Hispanic cultures, particularly the animistic indigenous cultures, where man, as part of nature, is thus both in harmony with it and at the mercy of its mysterious powers. Fatalism or the so-called "lottery mentality," so prominent in much of Hispanic literature, reflects a world view that does not award man a dominant, let alone omnipotent, position over the forces of nature. Students noted, for example, that this view per-

vades the poem "Que hay otra voz" discussed previously—the Mexican worker's skin and eyes are the color of the earth, he wears the soil of his labor, he bears the pain inflicted by the harsh elements of nature, he accepts his lot in life.

Castañeda contends that time-consciousness divides U.S. and Hispanic cultures as much as any other single factor (1995). Indeed, students did not hesitate to capture U.S. mainstream culture's monochronic view of time and a *Future + Present over Past* values orientation that focuses on the present as prelude to the immediate future. While a future orientation implies such things as goal-setting, diagnosis, risk evaluation, and planning, combined with a present orientation, it poses conflict in the need for instant gratification and the assessment of progress-by-the-moment. On the other hand, using this model, students tended to orient Hispanic polychronic views of time as present-dominated or a mixture of *Present + Past over Future* as they had perceived Mexicans' profound sense of history, of past as living spirit from which the present draws its vital energy. Indeed, if the future colors the present in the U.S. perspective, the past does lend a different texture to present time in Mexican society. However, the notion of time in Hispanic cultures is not quite so easily captured by the past-present-future framework; it rather defies the Kluckhohn linear representation. The notion of time as circular echoes through much of Hispanic literature, for example, confounding U.S.-student readers, for whom time must always "march on" and produce change. In terms of principal *Activity orientation*, students described the U.S. mainstream as a *Doing* culture that focuses on products, accomplishments, achievements, and material success. Words such as *(un)productive, input/output, competition*, so difficult to translate from English to Spanish, reveal a values framework that is self-focused and work-centered, concerned with utility and pragmatism. In contrast, students oriented Hispanic cultures toward the *Being* values—living and enjoying life as it comes, focusing on friendships and the development of social relations. They noted a similar contrast regarding *Relational preferences*. In U.S. mainstream culture, for example, the Self, identified with the individual and sharply separated from the Other (by invisible doors), is the basic unit of social organization. Students thus construed U.S. mainstream culture as a *Lateral + Collateral* combination in which group membership does not define Self, but rather promotes the individual goals or interests of members; social obligations are not necessarily binding; kinship and friendship ties exist but are external to the individual and are not of the extended, intricate, and self-de-

fining nature that characterizes the dominant *Collateral* orientation of Hispanic cultures. To the Hispanic's *Collateral* orientation of Self in contrast with Group, of nurturing connections and favor-exchanges and the obligatory cultivation of reciprocity (which U.S. learners often interpret as "personal invasion"), students added *Lineal* values to express the existence of status hierarchies within collective relationships. (For excellent classroom exploration of this topic, see Alvarez Evans & González, 1993.)

Use of the Kluckhohn model must be accompanied by a few caveats. First, the model is itself the product of a "cultural mind" and necessarily constrained by what that mind's eye could perceive. Second, the coincidence of two cultures appearing to correspond to the same preference-orientation range for a given variable on this model should not necessarily imply similarity of these two cultures. Two cultures may appear to have a dominant present-time orientation, for example, and yet their notions of present time may be quite distinct. Third, as Mestenhauer notes, although there is a "fit" among a culture's choices, the variables are independent of each other, without any implied or inherent hierarchical order (1998). Moreover, no culture is "captured" at any given point in its story merely by its dominant preferences, for these are always in constant interplay with its accepted variants, with the belief clusters of groups within the group. While Ortuño suggests that this taxonomy can be used with language learners at all levels to analyze everything from a specific textbook culture note to a specific literary piece (1991), it has been discussed here as a summative connection-and-aligning device, to help students ultimately coalesce their learning into a view of a system. Indeed, if this model is used with learners (with the caveats mentioned), questions of how and when to use it are important. If we impose an automatic sense-making scheme before learners have had the opportunity to fight their own battles and develop their own strategies, we may depict the cross-cultural-understanding process as a simple map-plotting act. Further, while the Kluckhohn model is extremely flexible, it is only a tool and depends on the quality of observation, quantity of knowledge, and authenticity and variety of sources. Textbook notes, already compromised by the outsider's voice, will undoubtedly produce the impression that cultures are flat, static, and homogeneous and can be compartmentalized and classified neatly. Moreover, since the model is built on the notion of options and preferences, each option having many preference permutations, only the actual experience of many authentic Hispanic voices can capture the internal dynamism of a living culture.

## Culture as Communication and Community

"[T]he underlying goal of language learning is communication. But ... for what purpose? ... To communicate effectively ... I must learn about a person's background, values, where he's coming from."

Keshav, third-year Spanish student

Edward Hall's message in *The Silent Language* is one foreign language teachers recite almost as a mantra: Culture is communication, communication is culture (1959). Yet, foreign language classrooms may be the only place in the world where the two are so unnaturally separated. While all indications are that communication has taken hold as the direction in foreign language classrooms across the country, culture is still considered the "expendable fifth skill" (Kramsch, 1993, p. 1). The comment of a college freshman, Tim, on the first day of his second-year Spanish class reflects much the same view of language and culture as divorceable entities:

I would say that culture is interesting, but I'm really here to learn the language. I know that it's important to know culture too, but I'm not sure it's going to help me speak the language.

While the foreign language classroom is the optimum site for other-culture entry through the language, cross-cultural knowledge and understanding do not simply and effortlessly accrue from language learning, arise automatically from contextualized language practice and communicative activities, or lie in a finite number of language-use contexts. The process of communication has no mastery end point. And cultural contexts, not stable sets of predictable circumstances but fluid social constructions, are created and shaped by people in dialogue and thus are of infinite constellations of place + situation + participants + roles + statuses + backgrounds + purposes + interactive sequences + time + mode + genre + language code, and so on. Kramsch notes that language teachers and learners often overlook the fact that language in use both reflects and creates context:

... conventional pedagogic practice tends to view context as a given, pre-existing reality that serves to disambiguate the meaning of language forms... Both teacher and learners tend to ignore the degree to which their use of language constructs the very context in which they are learning it (1993, p. 105).

Thus, the answers to teaching culture will not likely be found in exportable "culture" materials and product-measurement devices but in our own reflection on Hall's two statements: Communication is culture. Culture is communication. Language is a product of culture; it mediates communication, but it is not itself communication. Within every spoken exchange and between every written line beats the pulsating dialogue that is culture. As teachers of communication, therefore, our real aim, to be shared with students from day one, is to help students construct another cultural reality. And this is only done through the culture's own language tools. The *National Standards* summarize the development of "Communication" as "knowing how, when, and why to say what to whom." And in a separate goal area, called "Communities," the *Standards* speak to the notion of lifelong learning in the use of the language for personal enjoyment and enrichment. This section will focus on *communication* as culture and on growth of the cross-cultural mind in the "culture" of *community*.

In *The Great Good Place*, Ray Oldenburg mourns the sacrifice to suburbia of the comfortable and connective "third places" of America's past—those places apart from home and work where people used to gather easily, inexpensively, regularly, and pleasurably just to talk (1989). These *learning* places connect and unify people through the tonic of friendship, creating support networks, fostering counsel and debate. In essence, third places are those environments where community happens. Not a place but an experience, community is made from conversation. And conversation, both public and within each of us, is "our essential cultural inheritance into whose skill and partnership education initiates us" (Oakeshot, 1962, p. 198).

To initiate our foreign language learners into the skill and partnership of this cultural conversation, perhaps our first step might be to recognize a distinction between conversation and talk. Although talk is required for conversation, much talk is only that—of and on the surface of life. And much talk in our classrooms, where the air is achievement and the measure of success is quantitative, is display talk, whose sole purpose is to demonstrate the degree of lexical and structural utterance-control a learner possesses at a given point in time. Conversation, on the other hand, is not always convertible to the hard currency of measurement devices, for it is the shared experience of engagement, connection, relationship, revelation of uniqueness. While talk may be memorable to learners in terms of a linguistic feat, conversation is substantively and emotionally memorable. Indeed, Kramsch suggests that much of classroom discourse, constrained to superficial linguistic exchanges, simply doesn't go far enough, does not



begin to adequately exploit the range of contextual possibilities (1993, p. 91).

## The What, When, and to Whom of the Cultural Conversation

In spite of their other-language insecurities, foreign language learners find talk easier than conversation. As pure linguistic exchange, talk is non-threatening; it does not require personal investment of the conversation caliber. It does not involve the same quality of substantive decisions regarding *what* to say or *when* to say it, nor does it require the constant "to whom" relational attention to the interlocutor that characterizes the nurturing give-and-take aspects of natural conversation. The following incident may demonstrate that the decision of *what* to say is not merely one of vocabulary and that the decisions of *when* and *to whom* have tangled cultural roots and broad cultural consequences.

A class of second-year Spanish students attended a dinner at my home with four Hispanic students of different nationalities, including one recent arrival to the U.S. Students grouped randomly at three tables for dinner, although I asked the Hispanic students to sit at various tables to foster conversation in Spanish. From the sounds of the voices, dinner conversations appeared lively, the topics varied. However, at the end of dinner I realized that all conversation throughout the evening had basically been maintained by the same handful of students; one table, at which two Hispanics and two U.S. students were seated, had been relatively silent. In casual exchange at the start of the next class, these two students, Jennifer and Kristen, described their dinner "conversation" something like this (reconstructed here from memory, in abbreviated form, in English):

**Jennifer:** I was sitting at a table with Kristen and the two Colombians.

**Teacher:** Oh, great! So you got to know Roberto and his sister Patricia.

**Kristen:** Yes, they were nice.

**Teacher:** What did you talk about?

**Jennifer:** Nothing really. *They didn't really ask me anything.*

**Kristen:** We all gave our names and Roberto talked a bit. He speaks English,

too. *Patricia didn't talk much.*

**Teacher:** Why? Why do you think she didn't talk much?

**Jennifer:** I don't know. *She was new. Maybe she was scared.*

**Teacher:** You said they didn't ask you anything. What did you expect them to ask you?

**Kristen:** *About life in the United States? I don't know.*

**Teacher:** Were you uncomfortable speaking Spanish?

**Jennifer:** No, I wanted to practice Spanish but I didn't know what to talk about.

**Kristen:** *We didn't really know them. It was a little uncomfortable.*

As the italicized statements reveal, for some students, the act of "just plain conversation" as social activity can be uncomfortable, not for the linguistic challenges, but for the demands of constructing a relationship. For these women, it was the *what*, *when*, and *to whom* decisions that resulted in silence. Regarding the *what* to say, their comments reflect a stimulus-response view of conversation—they had awaited their stimulus from the Other, which didn't occur. Bellah et al., in fact, observe that the particularly American notion of the relationship between Self and society, combined with the gradual shift from a producer-based to consumer-based economy, has grown a U.S. culture in which people's sense of themselves comes to be centered around the "taking in" of objects, ideas, and images which are provided for them, rather than the construction of these ideas and images from only their own experiences (1985, pp. 38–39). This consumer-oriented mindset often permeates classrooms as well, where students await to take in the instructor's planned activities, await their question and turn to speak, and talk for the approval of teachers rather than converse to build community. In terms of *to whom*, the girls noticed that Patricia did not speak much during the conversation, and they offered in explanation that she was "new," possibly scared; yet, they had not felt responsible for bringing her into a group, had not desired to know her and, instead of perceiving a cross-cultural learning opportunity, had limited the context to "what does this new arrival want to know about us?"

Perhaps the *when* of the young women's silence is a cross-cultural study in itself. In U.S. culture, the consumption of food tends to dominate the concept of dining; thus, once the food is consumed, the dining event is over. In Hispanic cultures, however, dining is a premier social event imbued with interactional *obligation*. The custom of the *sobremesa*, an after-dinner chat that may last hours, reflects a relational orientation and perception of Self that is Other-centered rather than One-centered. Food is enjoyed in large part for the pleasure derived from the company of those with whom it is shared. And it is in conversation that the company of others is experienced in *being*. Indeed, if the culture we are teaching is one rooted in the value of friendship systems and social relationships, such



as are Hispanic cultures, attention to the art of conversation may result in the most profound of all cross-cultural learning experiences.

## The How and Why of the Cultural Conversation

An example illustrates that the issues of *how* and *why* are also not as simple as they may seem. In a third-year Business Spanish class in which debate is a standard component, students had chosen to treat the topic "Affirmative Action" in a unit on Human Resources. The topic itself had prompted a great deal of pre-debate discussion—how to express the U.S. meaning in Spanish, whether the U.S. meaning was transferable to the Hispanic world, and, finally, whether any current movements or legislation in the Hispanic world were directed toward similar aims or derived from comparable conditions to those of the U.S. To find answers to their questions, students consulted Hispanic newspapers, magazines, and official documents via the Internet. They found that the advocacy of "legalized preferential treatment" was an issue being debated in many Hispanic countries, particularly in documents from Chile, Colombia, Mexico, Peru, and Spain, and that its meaning appeared more (though not exclusively) embedded in discussion of the rights of women and handicapped than in issues of race, ethnicity, or cultural group. Their reaction to the *language* of these authentic texts, however, produced its own culture lesson. Some supporters of affirmative action expressed outright anger at the Spanish term used throughout the documents, *discriminación positiva*, and objected to the constant use of words such as *preferencial*, whose direct translation to English evoked quite negative connotations for them. After much (at times, tense) discussion among students, one African American, Henry, captured the dilemma: It was not the Spanish word he rejected; rather, it was having to use this Spanish word to describe the *unique U.S. condition*. He loudly proclaimed to the class (translated here):

I'm not going to use the term "discriminación positiva." It's not the same. The only term I can use to debate affirmative action in the U.S. is "affirmative action." Here, the situation is different. I can't translate the situation here into another language where the situation is different.

Henry had made a significant cross-cultural observation: the difficulty and deceptiveness of trying to express one society's history and cultural perspective through the language created by *another* society to express its own, different, perspective and condition. Indeed, this pre-debate discussion had afforded the class some insight into communication. The real *how* of communication is not

ripe for picking at the surface level of words and grammatical structures. It resides in the cultural mind.

This same debate also produced cross-cultural observations regarding the *why* of communication. Structured to provide opportunities for both rehearsed and spontaneous speech, the actual debate had presentational and interactive phases. In the presentational phase, each side had the opportunity to present rehearsed arguments. Students were told they would receive a baseline grade on this component that considered quality of both content and expression—in other words, use of vocabulary and grammatical accuracy would be evaluated in this rehearsed segment (a reading of notes would incur an automatic 20-point deduction). When both sides had given their arguments, the interactive (or what students have termed the "atlasque") phase began. Students received one point added to their baseline scores for each substantive and comprehensible contribution to the argument, regardless of the grammatical and lexical accuracy of their expression. However, each contribution had to be either (1) in response to a particular member of the opponent team and prefaced by a summary of what she or he had said (for example, "John, you said that ..." or "When you said that ... did you mean...?") or (2) connected to the topic of a previous speaker, with such gambits as: "speaking of ..." or "regarding the aspect of..." This protocol was to encourage good listening and confirmation of student-student comprehension, foster conversational connection, and discourage student delivery of pre-planned decontextualized statements. Further, students were informed that I would neither mediate the conversation for them nor provide words for them unless deemed essential. In most cases, students had to find a way to rephrase what they wanted to say without depending on the instructor as "dictionary." This debate format has proved motivating to students who not only invest in careful pre-debate preparation and research but become fully engaged in spirited discussion that does not close simply because a class session ends. Although some students participate more than others in the interactive phase, in the debate of "Affirmative Action" in this Business Spanish class, I had noticed that one ordinarily outspoken student, Robert, who had delivered a very cogent and persuasive argument in the presentational phase had become suddenly silent during the interactive phase, in spite of subtle attempts to coax him into the conversation. Afterwards, I praised his presentation and inquired as to his silence during the discussion. He replied (summarized here in English.):

What's the use? Here, everyone was arguing from their emotions, and some times they were even repeating themselves. After about 10 minutes I decided I wasn't going to participate anymore. It was obvious I wasn't going to *change anyone's mind*. And if I wasn't going to be able to change anyone's mind, why should I even bother discussing the topic? I don't understand the purpose of expressing my ideas if nothing is gained by it.

Robert's comment reveals the *why* of conversation from this U.S. perspective and thus exposes some vast cultural differences: the U.S. view of *doing* motivated by purpose and resulting in ends, products, accomplishments *vs.* the Hispanic view of *being* that revels in the experience itself; the U.S. view of Self as One-defined *vs.* the Hispanic view of Self as Other-joined. Indeed, Hispanic students debate issues freely and constantly and are often very surprised at U.S. students' reluctance to involve themselves in such conversations, at their lack of expressed opinion or preference (often interpreted as being uninformed), or at their frequent bland rejoinder "*¡qué interesante!*" Kramsch makes a similar observation of U.S. learners of German—that U.S. students are generally much less seriously committed to defending their opinion than German students would be in a German academic context, where opinions are more likely to be personal stands that are worth justifying and defending. However, she connects this causally to the classroom, where she concludes that "foreign language teachers generally shy away from too conflictual a clash of opinions, especially if they pertain to sex education, religion, or politics" (1991, p. 85). Robert's comments reveal a different, deeper explanation for his reticence—a cultural explanation that had been exposed through dialogue. Indeed, culture learning is all about dialogue.

Robert had vowed at that moment that he could not change. No one would ask him to. Cross-cultural understanding does not involve abandonment of one's own cultural psyche, the substitution of another system of values, or even necessarily the adoption of other behaviors. Yet, in the intimate confrontation of this cultural conflict, Robert did change. He became more conscious of his own culture as *his*, and by seeing it as separate and identified, he was able to tuck it back a bit as safe and unthreatened in order to "risk" more comfortably trying out a different role for himself. He had also apparently begun a cross-cultural dialogue with himself. Reflecting on a second debate, in which he was able to do something he had previously found nonsensical, he created his own sense of "wonderment." In his final course evaluation, he commented:

The second debate was more fun, maybe because I talked more. I tried to imagine myself in a Hispanic context throughout and, even though the topic was one I felt very strongly about, I didn't think in terms of changing peo-

ple's minds. I focused instead on how I clarified my own thoughts and expressed my own ideas and it felt good. I'm not sure I'm able to achieve another's outlook because I still was not that interested in the unconvincing arguments of those on the opposing side, but I think I did show respect for their ideas (and for the debate itself) by participating and responding. OK, so there is some fun in "conversation." I admit it. But I wonder if it's just my own ego gratification???

If our aim is to help students understand what it means *to be* in those cultures where third places are active in the mind, we will need to create this culture in our classrooms. And if we view growth of the cross-cultural mind as a lifelong process, we will want to use dialogue to dig into the big issues of communication. Certainly, our mission is too important to define the communication-culture connection solely in terms of the teaching of discrete sociolinguistic protocols, too complex to view culture as simply the content of discussion, and too urgent to treat culture merely as a set of stock "contexts." Cross-cultural situations are everywhere in the foreign language classroom. While at every moment, in every exchange, our culture's assumptions speak our minds, it is only constant dialogue that truly opens them.

## Dialogic Communities

Dialogue as whole-class reflective discussion, according to Wells, not only fosters the development of the collaborative ethos of a community of inquiry, it also provides the setting in which knowledge is co-constructed, as students and teacher together make meaning on the basis of each other's experiences (1994, p. 19). But can there also be dialogue places outside the classroom? Can the Internet's "electropolis," for example, serve as a third place for building community in exchange, a safe haven for reflection and conversation? (See Lee, this volume.) As an adaptation of the dialogue journal, students at all levels of language study may participate in cross-cultural reflection via a cyber-journal, once a week sharing their cross-cultural reflections via e-mail or chat room formats with a group of classmates. In such cyber-interaction, students can explore different cultural topics with each other, share impressions, reactions, interpretations of literary works or journalistic readings, discuss research data, even correct each other's Spanish. Yet, while "cyber-conversing" in written form allows learners the opportunity to attend to the linguistic aspects of their messages, it should not be confused with the self-investment process of writing; and while the e-mail format allows the transfer of messages swiftly from one party to another, it should not be confused with the spon-

taneous, participatory, turn-taking process of face-to-face conversation. The written dialogue of the Internet, a series of message-retrieving and -packaging acts, builds its own type of community. Students feel they are talking to each other, yet in a mode that allows them unpressured time to think about their ideas. As one first-year student remarked (translated here):

I like to communicate via e-mail because I can talk about a lot of things, and I'm not scared. I can use the dictionary if needed. And I can think about my ideas and those of others.

In the dialogue of the cross-cultural classroom, it will be the experience of interacting with authentic texts that will provide the richest source of input for learners' cross-cultural discovery. Indeed, if there is one word that captures the essence of our mission in growing the cross-cultural mind, it is "authenticity," for no amount of knowledge or pedagogical expertise can capture on the bridge of anecdote the dynamism, inner diversity, and internal logic that lies behind the boundary of another reality, as the voices of those who *live* behind that boundary. As they approach authentic texts, learners will require support and guidance not only to separate their own culture's voices from the voices of the target culture, but to sort the voices within the target culture—groups from groups, group from individual—to experience the complexity and uniqueness of each culture, and of their own. Through authentic voices from a variety of disciplines, the language and culture are experienced as one. Through the continuous connection of these voices, knowledge is broadened, deepened, refined, reconfigured for application to new problems.

And in the cacophony of voices there is yet another type of dialogue to be nurtured: introspective dialogue with oneself. While the dialogic exchange of meaning characteristic of oral speech is ideally suited to collaboration, it is writing that enables the self-dialogue of reflection and imagination. Reflective writing, as the ultimate thinking device, allows learners the opportunity to explore their own perceptions, reinterpret experiences, envision alternatives, create new self-awareness. The constant interaction of all these dialogue modes, each one contextualizing the other, each one challenging assumptions, each one consolidating, stretching and connecting to the other, grows the cross-cultural mind.

## Conclusion

This chapter has suggested a new concept of mission in the classroom that derives from viewing ourselves first and foremost as teachers of culture. As learners enter new places with their own culture's baggage, it will be our task to help them identify it, claim ownership of it, turn back to deposit it, and enter anew. This is, indeed, a never-ending process—one whose value lies less in the completeness of the knowledge gained than in the strategic thought exercised, the imagination and resourcefulness cultivated. Each visit will be an awakening, producing new knowledge and connecting it to the known; each will bring learners closer to pulling from the internal logic of another culture; each will expose new conflicts and ambiguities, provoke new wonderment; and each will afford learners a sharper vision of themselves. In the knowledge of our boundaries lies the recognition that we are all different. In our cross-cultural minds lie our bridge to understanding.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup>The text translates roughly as follows:  
An unyielding job/ that of creating myself in my own image/ each time with each word pronounced:

*postprandial*  
*subsequently*

And to write finally with will/ the fourteen letters of my name/ and above/ the word

*freedom*

<sup>2</sup>The text translates roughly as: "Not punctual" means not responsible, which means unmotivated, which means without goals, which means lack of interest in the future, which means immaturity.

"Poor" means he has no money, which means he has few things, which means he has no education, which means he works with his hands, which means he's never going to be successful.

<sup>3</sup>Text translates roughly as:

U.S. "Anglo" voice, in unison

Inalterable schedules

the alarm clock mechanically awakens

*Chicano voice, in solo*

... the crack of dawn

...(what size is time?)

You, what's your name, ...

... mexicano, latino,

*Meskin, skin, Mex-guy, Mex-Am.*

*Latin-American, Mexican American, ...*

... Chicano,

you, of tepid eyes ...

... like the color of the earth,

you, with the new blue-jeans,  
 ...  
 seem to return every year ...  
 transitory—  
 ... an itinerary  
 ... you're just passing through.  
 ...  
 ... like an elemental force,  
 ... rooted between the *ser* and *estar* of ...  
 You're a drudge, ...

... you weigh  
 your sack of cotton—a hundred pounds  
 ... are changed into your pittance.  
 that on Saturdays ...

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